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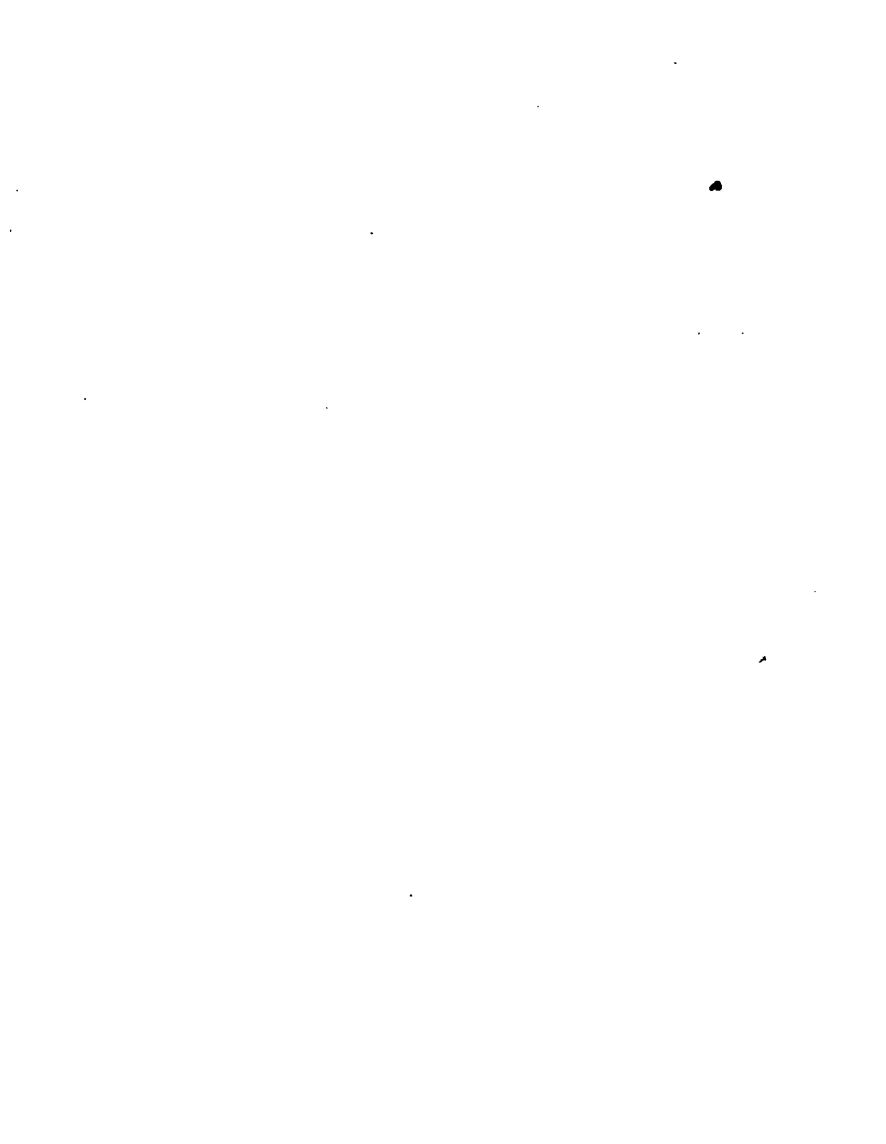
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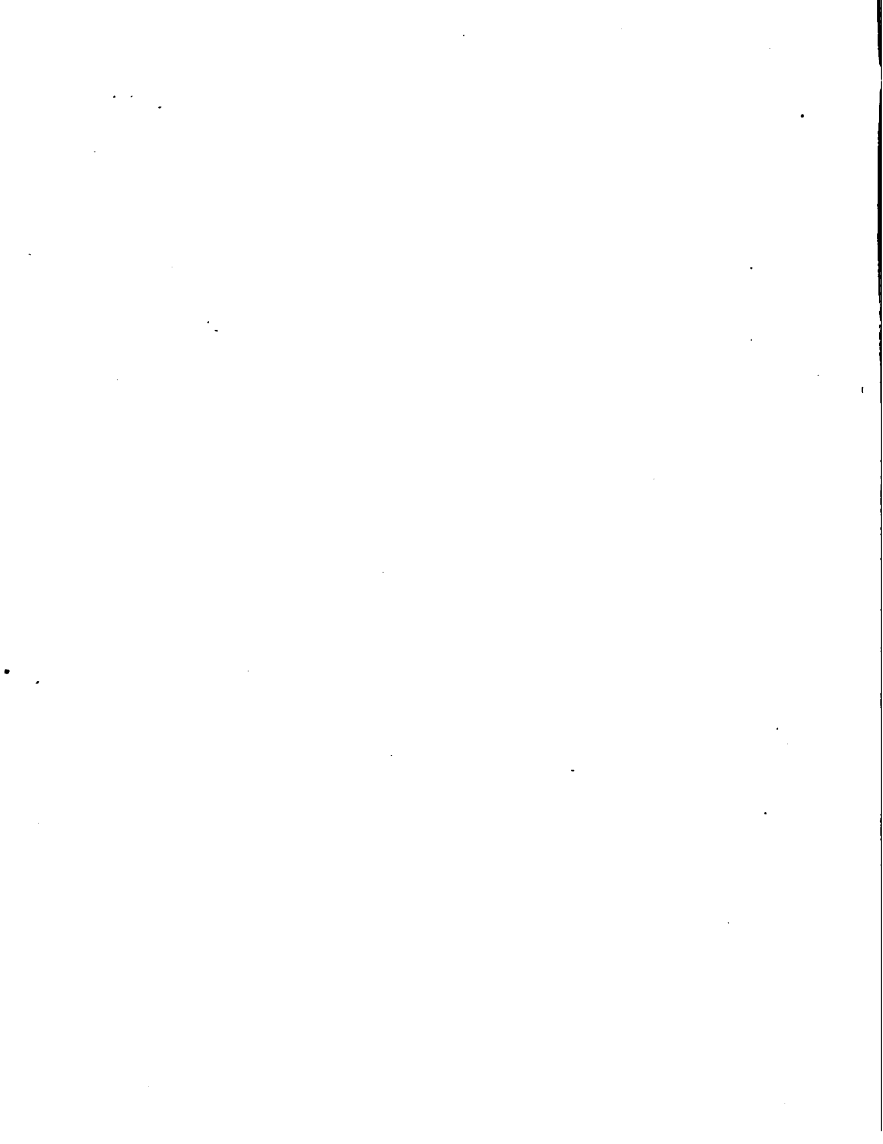


THE GREY GUEST CHAMBER.

“Be patient, for the world is broad and wide.”

PRICE 20 CENTS.

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THE GREY GUEST-CHAMBER.

By E. T. D.

“Be patient, for the world is broad and wide.”

CHAPTER 1.

“Thee must not forget, Moses, the Centennial comes but once a century!” As she spoke, my wife Peace poured out a cup of tea; after handing it to me, she raised a letter, which had been laid aside for a moment while she attended to the duties of our small table. To speak the plain truth, the contents of this letter had caused me some annoyance, it is announced a coming visit from Cyn-

thia Stonewall of Boston. Not that I am inhospitably disposed, but the ways of this third cousin are not winning, her person is unattractive, and her tongue such as may be described as wagging both ends at the same time.

"Ten years have passed since Cynthia Stonewall last broke bread with us, Moses," said my persistent Peace. "Time, perhaps, has softened her asperities, doubtless we will have no other visitors, having so few kinsfolk, and the guest chamber is now quite ready."

I believe in my heart that my wife was desirous of exhibiting the newly furnished room with our National Exhibition, if pride ever gained admission in her gentle breast, for more than once I had found her inspecting with an air of quiet satisfaction the lavender carpet sprigged with small white clover leaves, the new grey furniture and papering, and the snowy window curtains. Hours had been spent in matching and purchasing the needful articles for

this dove's nest. An iron cage would have been more suitable for such an occupant as Cynthia Stonewall.

"How long will she remain under this roof, Peace Pittman?"

"Nay, that sounds unlike thee, Moses Pittman."

The face of my placid Peace was visibly disturbed, so I replied, "Well and good, few words are best," just as Sheba, our colored maid of all the work, entered the tea-room, followed by puss, our large, white Angora cat, and, including these two, our entire family circle was now complete, if I except a pair of white doves left in a cote in our back yard, which are usually fed by the fair hands of their owner.

"A letter for Peace Pittman!" said Sheba, placing a plate of warm biscuit on the table, and extending in her dusky hand a rose-colored epistle, so highly scented that an odor of musk was perceptible in our little tea-room.

"Thee will doubtless find the name of the writer inside, Peace Pittman," I remarked, as she studied the outside with care.

She started at this hint and took up her spotless steel tea knife (for we can not tolerate the silver-washed knives which are now in general use on our tables), and a look of great wonder spread over her countenance as she, after cutting the cover, glanced at the signature and read aloud :

"Florence Bellefair."

The name was familiar, I must have heard it before, but when or where I could not at that moment recall to my memory.

"'My dear cousins, Moses and Peace,'" read my astonished Peace. "Moses, what can this purport?"

"Read further and we will discover," I replied, and she proceeded :

"Shall we not this Centennial year clasp friendly hands across the bloody chasm? The hatchet is

buried ; the flower of Southern chivalry fertilizes our soil ; from the ashes of dead braves sweet blossoms are springing—the grass grows rich and rank in Southern cemeteries.’ ”

My Peace paused and raised her eyes. “ Continue,” I said, “ we must soon find a clue in this labyrinth.

“ ‘We have eaten the bread of adversity, moistening it with bitter tears. Our substance is wasted, our homes destroyed, our lands desolated. But now the enemy offers the right hand of reconciliation ! Shall we not forgive, letting by-gones be by-gones ? Let ‘the dead past bury its dead !’ In welcoming warm Southern hearts to Northern homes, the past will be forgotten, and better things presaged for the future. Moses Pittman cannot have forgotten his favorite but unfortunate cousin, Florence, who chose to follow the dictates of her own heart in uniting her fortunes with the brave Col. Bellefairs ! My name will recall a host of old, but I cannot believe forgotten, memories.’ ”

My Peace raised her eyes again with a glance of reproach.

"Continue," I said, and she complied, prompted by a feeling of curiosity very natural in her sex. "'For my own sake I would not solicit or suggest hospitality ; but I have a son, a noble boy of ten, to whom the glories of the Exposition would be an unfailing fountain of useful memories for years to come. Our means are extremely limited, I must confess ; the expenses for traveling can be arranged ; beyond that I am powerless. Need I say more, but that I hope to receive an immediate response to this epistle. From your attached, but unfortunate kinswoman, Florence Bellefair.'"

My speechless Peace folded the letter, putting it on the tea-tray over which she presided, and as I remained silent she waited for me to break the pause. Unwilling to do this, she was at last driven to ask :

"And who may this kinswoman be, Moses ? If she ever was a Friend, she has strayed widely from her fold."

"Our mothers were of distant kin," I replied. Rising and walking around the table, I took her soft hand in my own. "Florence was a simple woman, who ran away with a villain against the wishes of her friends. He has died and left her ; with her son, penniless, I presume. I saw her but once, when I was a mere youth of sixteen. I have not given her a dozen thoughts in twenty-five years. But since she has craved our hospitality, we cannot refuse it. So thee must write, Peace Pittman, and set a time for her coming."

My pacified Peace did not demur, and the letter being duly written and posted, she busied herself in giving finishing touches in the guest chamber, and with Sheba's assistance, the paint, silver, china, and linen in our house underwent a through cleansing ; and at last everthing was in a state of perfect readiness, the cat and doves also receiving due attention, puss, indeed, looking after her baths and rubbings in keeping with her immaculate surroundings.

Cynthia Stonewall was punctuality itself—as reliable as the mariners compass or old-time hour-glass—Providence not interfering ; so when the day appointed for her arrival rolled around, all things being ready, my pretty Peace, attired in her second-best gown, sat with her 'knitting in hand awaiting our Boston kinswoman in the little tea-room, where the table was already set with forethought for a dusty, tired traveler.

“ A coach is stoppin' 'fore the door, Peace !”

Sheba made this announcement, and I went out to meet and welcome our guest. Cynthia Stonewall, having already alighted, was then standing haggling with the driver.

“ Wait a moment, Moses, until I have settled with this exorbitant man !” she said, as I stood with my right hand extended. I feared time had not softened Cynthia's asperities. Her figure was still tall, raw-boned and gaunt ; her outside garment, an ulster of brown linen, scantily made ; on her head she wore

a large, flapping straw hat, tied under her chin with a brown ribbon ; in one hand she held a well-preserved but rusty umbrella ; in the other she clasped her large pocket-book, and from the gestures, made with the former I could not wonder that the driver kept his distance from the umbrella.

"Have you no sense of honor?" she demanded, in a loud voice. "Must dishonesty disgrace this city at this time, even."

The driver scratched his head and looked puzzled.

"One dollar and twenty-five cents, Mem, if you plaze," he said.

"You are not an American!"

"Plase, God, I'm not that, If I'm to believe my own mother!" he said, with a broad grin.

I saw that our neighbors were peeping out from behind their shutters ; the butcher boy, who was bringing home some meat, overheard the altercation ; in a few moments a small crowd might be collected before my door.

"Enter, Cynthia," I said, "I will settle with this man." I propelled her toward the house. 'Imposition!' she muttered, but my wife, meeting her on the threshold, gently lured her in.

'Sure, it's no imposition; I said one dollar and twenty-five cents. She said, 'too much,' but in she got all the same,' said the driver.

I paid the required sum and dismissed him, after our kinswoman's small hairy trunk, studded with brass-headed nails, was safely deposited in the hall, and from thence carried to the dove's-nest, where I found my Peace and Cynthia, who, with one swift, comprehensive glance, took in all of its modest, neat appointments.

'I see you believe more in harmony than in contrasts,' she observed.

'As Friends, we ever have,' answered my ever-ready Peace.

'Certainly, it has a quiet, soothing influence.' She threw her hat and ulster on the snowy coun-

terpane ; then, as I entered with the trunk, adding, 'The weakness of human nature is abominable, Moses ! That man should not be encouraged.' The charge still rankled in her bosom ; I feared the grievance would not readily be forgotten.

'It is a relief, after the close, dusty cars,' she continued, taking a seat beside my Peace on the grey lounge. 'By the way, Moses, do you know that the grade of the road is too narrow by three inches ? I tell you, there is a perceptible difference between Massachusetts and Pennsylvania roads !'

'Very probable !'

I retreated from this virgin's bower, rubbing my bald head in some perturbation ; in this state my good Peace found me, some time after, in the tea-room. This trick she regards with an unfavorable eye, imagining that it usually betokens annoyance or impatience of spirit.

'Now, Moses——'

Here, Sheba coming in, interrupted her.

‘Cynthia says she can’t abide smells of any kind ; if thee hasn’t got any castile soap, she would rather have common brown than that scented stuff!’

‘Thee might have known she would prefer castile!’

Any reproach my gentle Peace would have uttered died away upon her lips, as she went to satisfy the wants of our guest. When she returned Cynthia was with her, having exchanged her linen dress for a black alpaca, made with an eye more to economy than extravagance, and I had now the opportunity of observing closely the ravages made by the impress of time on the face of our kinswoman.

Her high cheek bones were more prominent ; her small, light-blue eyes no softer ; her nose inclined more toward the aquiline ; her sandy hair, drawn tightly back from a lofty brow, was plentifully sprinkled with grey, and she had lost two of her front teeth. But she was as it had pleased Heaven to make her, nothing more nor less, by the aid of

artifice, or by habits of neglect or improvidence ; eking a comfortable maintenance out of an income of \$300 per annum, left her for life by an uncle, a minister of the Universalist persuasion, with whom she had lived as an adopted daughter.

‘ You see, Moses, I am the same frank, outspoken woman ! ’ she said, as we seated ourselves at the tea-table. ‘ Honest and honorable I hope to live and die, but one can never tell what pernicious drugs are introduced into these fanciful soaps. So I eschew them altogether ! ’

‘ Did thee find the castile soap for Cynthia Stonewall, Peace ? ’ I asked.

‘ Yes, ’ replied our cousin ; ‘ in fact, I expect to find everything that is required in a well-regulated household in this home. Moses, you keep your own tolerably well, only a trifle bald, that is natural ; and as for Peace, well, I cannot flatter, but time certainly has dealt kindly with her. Isn’t it wonderful how we resist atmospheric influences,

drinking them in, literally, at every pore, we having 2,000 to every square inch. How the skin retains its delicacy and beauty is a marvel! Peace has housed herself, while I take my daily constitutional, facing heat and cold, frost and rain!’

We could not doubt this assertion, for Cynthia's complexion looked as if she had seen service forty years before the mast.

‘No tea, thanks, Peace! Only a little cold milk and porridge for breakfast and supper. A very simple diet, but serving my purposes well enough. I don't indulge in luxuries. Don't be worried, Peace, if you have no porridge prepared; crackers and milk will do very well instead.’

My thoughtful Peace, having provided an ample repast, glanced at the untasted dishes with disappointment, while Cynthia broke her crackers in small bits and put them in her cup of milk. ‘I have not had a day's illness for ten years; I will take a few berries, no sugar. Nature never intend-

ed us to destroy the flavor of fruit by burying it in sugar.'

When the meal was over, as it was still daylight, Cynthia proposing to stroll out for a walk, we agreed, my neat Peace wearing for the first time, although the weather was unsettled, a new dove-colored silk bonnet, and Cynthia donning a small cape, reaching barely to her waist, and surmounting and crowding her tall and angular figure with a high black hat, ornamented by a stiff, brown wing. I have never admired or approved of much ornamentation; but in this case, I must confess the severe simplicity of our kinswoman's dress was not altogether to my mind.

The streets were full of bustling people, all agog with expectation. The Exhibition was to be opened on the morrow, and strangers had thronged to the city from every quarter of the globe. We met some Friends; these Cynthia saluted as courteously as we did ourselves. 'Gentlemen are al-

ways expected to do so in Boston,' she explained. 'And I, for one, shall not be outdone in politeness by the other sex.'

We made slow progress through the streets, as she examined many things with the utmost care, and told us just how and where we were very deficient and sadly behind Boston folks.

'Careless! careless! too little hair!' she murmured, as we came upon a mason's bed of fresh mortar. 'It will not last a quarter of century. We have been, hitherto, dwelling in cardboard houses; now we must begin to build for succeeding generations. Ah, what have we here?'

The new masonic temple claimed her attention, a building so wonderfully fair in its exterior, it would ornament any city in the world.

'I am positive that is a Norman arch, Moses! yes, quite positive. Yes, yes; and the only pure one I have seen in the country!'

She advanced, then retreated, then peered around

the sides of the building, and returning to the front portal, gazed up at the tower, her face radiant with delight; but backing suddenly, she unfortunately tripped up a child of three years, whose maid at that instant had dropped his hand. The little fellow tumbled in the gutter; my compassionate Peace lifted him up, brushed the dust from his clothes, while Cynthia Stonewall was still lost in the contemplation of the beautiful Norman arch. The maid darted an angry look at her as she smoothed the ruffles of the boy's fine dress, and picking up his hat, which had rolled off, replaced it on his head.

'I must say we *do* live in a progressive age. I am proud of this building. Moses, is that child injured?'

'You knocked him down!' cried the nurse.

'It is a mistake, my good woman!' said our cousin.

'Nurses are proverbially careless the world over.

You were not taking proper care of the child. The most faithful of that class are in Russia,' she added, as we continued our walk.

'Cynthia, thee did trip up the boy,' said my truthful Peace.

'Impossible! unless the child was walking alone; in that case the fault was hers, not mine.'

The crowd grew denser as we approached the grounds; my timid Peace clung, half terrified, to my arm. Cynthia bravely asserted a right to enough pavement to set her two feet upon firmly. But finding the discomforts great, and little pleasure or profit to be gained, we rode home in a Race Street car.

'This much we may learn at any rate,' said Cynthia, as we stood by our door. 'Crowds are alike—whether in Boston, Philadelphia, or the wilds of Africa. Might makes right; each asserts a claim, and in the struggle the strongest comes out victorious.'

‘Moses, visitors are surely awaiting us,’ observed my Peace. ‘A very bright light burns in the tea-room, and Sheba is not wasteful.’

CHAPTER II.

My Peace proceeding, we followed her to the tea-room, where a strange and unexpected scene greeted my eyes. A tall, slender young girl, with flashing dark eyes, scarlet cheeks, and black hair curling to her waist, stood bowing and smiling as if we were old and very dear friends. Certainly she was exceedingly comely; and her dress of black silk and velvet, spangled here and there and everywhere with crimson bows, set off this fair picture to good advantage. Turning my astonished eyes upon my trusty Peace, my astonishment increased when I

found that she was in the embrace of another damsel, clad in yellow with scarlet trimmings and facings; although younger, plumper, with blue eyes and locks of gold floating around her head and fringing her forehead like a Shetland fairy, she was also very fair to look upon.

‘Is this Mr. Moses Pittman?’ asked the sylph in black silk, with a winning smile.

I, bowing, offered my hand to our unknown visitor, who, grasping and shaking it with much friendliness, added, ‘My name is Roxana Heartie. Sis, there—her name is Isabel. There is only one year’s difference in our ages; I am eighteen, she is seventeen. Sis, this is Mr. Moses Pittman!’

Thereupon, transfixed with admiration and surprise, I offered my other hand to Isabel, and stood like a balance between the two. How long this absurd scene might have continued I could not say, had not Cynthia Stonewall rescued me from my strange position.

'I beg, ladies. Will you tell us why you are here?'

Isabel quailed a little as Cynthia's tall figure confronted her, but Roxana promptly replied, 'We came by rail to see the Centennial, like a good many other people, I guess!'

'So I suspected; but why are you in Moses Pittman's house?'

'I am sure they are welcome,' I began, although my prudent Peace remained silent.

'It is easily explained,' said Roxana, with a proud toss of her little head, drawing away her hand. Isabel followed her example. I pushed forward two chairs, and being all seated but Cynthia, who still stood bolt upright before the strangers, the eldest said, addressing me with a beaming smile, 'My pa knew you very well when he was a young man; you must remember Tom Heartie!'

'Very well,' I replied, bestowing a reassuring glance upon my silent Peace.

'Well, you see, sis and I wanted to come to the

Centennial the very worst way. Pa, he says, "Nonsense!" Ma says, "Oh, do let the girls have their own way!" "All foolishness and extravagance," says pa. "You can read all about it in *Frank Leslie's* and *Harper's Weekly*." But come we would!"

'That's so,' exclaimed Isabel, with great decision.

'So we teased and teased, until finally pa couldn't stand it any longer, and ma says, "Give the girls five hundred dollars. The Centennial only comes once in a lifetime, and all the richest people here are going. They can go to your old friend, Moses Pittman. He will look out for them, I know, and find them a boarding-house, or may be board them himself. That was only three days ago; there wasn't time enough to write and make arrangements, so we hurried up and started. But pa kept agging at ma for letting us come without sending you any word, so at last she spunks up: "Look here, Tom Heartie," she says, "suppose Moses

Pittman were to walk in our house this minute, what would you do?" "Shake hands with him, and make him stay a month," says pa. "And what do you take him for?" asks ma. "Our girls can pay their own way. Where to go—that's the trouble; and mind, I tell you, I'm sure that Moses Pittman will befriend them." And so we started, and here's a letter to you from pa.'

As I glanced over it, I recognized the handwriting of Thomas Heartie. He begged me to have an eye on his girls, and send them home safely at the expiration of one week.

'Why didn't your mother come with you?' inquired Cynthia.

'The baby's only nine month's old; pa thinks of calling him Moses Pittman. I'm like ma, but sis favors pa,' continued Roxana, 'and he always insists that this baby reminded him of Mr. Pittman.'

'Do you mean to say that you two young creatures intend to board alone in this crowded city?' asked Cynthia.

‘Why not! if Mr. Pittman can’t take us in. We hadn’t one bit of trouble traveling on alone; you can’t think how polite the gentlemen were all the way along; if we had had brothers posted at every station, we couldn’t have been treated with more attention. Isn’t that so, sis?’ Isabel nodded, and Cynthia Stonewall, sinking into a chair beside my wondering Peace, she gasped, ‘Have you many brothers and sisters?’

‘The last baby makes nine altogether,’ replied Isabel.

‘Moses, will thee come with me?’

I followed my wife outside the door, and when we were alone she said, ‘Moses, we cannot let these pretty young creatures shift for themselves in a strange, wicked city. The crowd we have seen this evening makes me tremble for them, and yet our guest-chamber——’

‘Is large enough for three; I will sleep on the lounge and give up the bed to those girls!’

Cynthia, suspecting the state of the case, had followed us, and was looking over my right shoulder as she offered this timely suggestion.

‘Well, well! if this is not a comment upon American children! But tell me, Moses, if you can, where in this world two pretty young girls could have traveled hundreds of miles in perfect security, and without meeting insult or disrespect? I am proud to believe in Republican America alone could such a state of things exist!’

‘Roxana and Isabel, we welcome ye both,’ said my good Peace, returning to the visitors. ‘And our house must be a place of shelter and protection.’

‘Oh, you dear, lovely, sweet Mrs. Pittman!’ The two girls threw their arms around the neck of my embarrassed Peace, almost smothering her for a moment with embraces.

‘Of course, we will pay our board, for pa wouldn’t hear of anything else, nor ma either,’ said Roxana,

when her enthusiasm had somewhat abated. 'Our trunk is at the depot, but here is the check.'

I took the check, replying that Thomas Heartie and I would settle the board, and late as it was, hurried off to attend to getting their luggage safely under my roof.

When I returned I found them refreshing themselves with good appetites with the dainties despised by Cynthia Stonewall, and the sight of their fresh, bright, young faces, and the sound of their lively, animated voices, I must confess, gave me no little pleasure. By ten o'clock our guests were safely stowed away in the grey-room; from the younger ones we heard chattering and laughter for an hour after, interspersed by an occasional remark from the elder woman, who had assured my hospitable Peace that a more comfortable bed could not have been found in Philadelphia than that provided for her on the lounge.

'Peace, the sight of their faces beside Cynthia Stonewall's is good for my eyes,' I said.

'Moses!'

Much meaning may be conveyed in a single word, and the confession I was on the point of making died away upon my lips. But a weight rested upon my conscience, for I was withholding a secret from my confiding Peace, the chosen partner of all my earthly joys and griefs. I was almost trembling with apprehension, even at that late hour, and listened to the echo of every approaching or receding foot-fall on the street pavement with a kind of dread, for what I had not confided to my Peace, I will here confess to my readers.

I had invited John Brisk, one of my best New York customers, to pass the first three days of the Centennial Exhibition under my roof. He might arrive at any moment, and how to rescue myself from the unpleasant dilemma in which I was placed through no intention or fault of my own was be-

yond my ability. In a month's time, perhaps, I could have thought of ways and means of agreeable extrication, but John Brisk might even then be hunting me out. My worthy Peace had remarked that large family circles were exceedingly pleasant, so I ventured to inquire :

‘Suppose another Centennial visitor should drop in upon us as unexpectedly as the daughters of Thomas Heartie—a gentleman of twenty-five or thereabout, of good business and position ?’

‘Impossible, Moses ! I beg thee will not even dream of such a thing to-night, for dreams sometimes come true !’

I allowed the matter to drop for the present.

CHAPTER III.

Early the next morning we were startled by successive peals of laughter issuing from the guest-chamber. My modest Peace immediately arose, slipped on her dressing-gown and slippers, and remarking that something unusual must have happened, she left me sitting up in bed, my own curiosity having been somewhat aroused by this sudden awakening from sound slumber.

‘It is nothing—nothing, Moses,’ she explained, rather mistily, when she returned. ‘Cynthia Stonewall was taking her morning bath, and the young girls were amused. She is now preparing for her morning constitutional!’

Peeping from my window, I soon after saw our cousin leaving the house, enveloped in her linen

Ulster and large hat ; but no sooner had our door closed than loud, prolonged, convulsive shrieks of merriment came from the grey-room.

‘Foolish girls!’ said my Peace, with a little smile curving the corners of her mouth. ‘They are growing boisterous!’

I held my tongue, but must confess that had the same provocation been offered, I also might have indulged in mirth, for I could easily imagine that Cynthia Stonewall, under some circumstances, might prove to be an amusing spectacle.

‘I hope Cynthia will receive it in good part,’ remarked my demure Peace.

Quite concerned on this account, she met our cousin when she returned, with an apology for the young creatures’ behavior, they not yet having made their appearance at the breakfast-table.

‘Do not mention it, Peace!’ she exclaimed, with much good-nature. I am, I hope, a sensible Boston woman, and never take offense where none is

meant. Poor thing! What miserable training! No wonder English mothers regard American children with horror!

It was evident when the girls appeared that she was sincere and cherished no malice in her heart against them, for she nodded pleasantly, and glanced at their white-frilled and fur-belowed dresses and pink and blue sashes with some admiration.

‘My dear girls,’ she cried, ‘in an ordinary boarding-house you certainly could not have worn these dresses.’

‘Why, we brought them on purpose!’ said Isabel, smoothing down a turbulent ruffle with much complacency. ‘It took mother a whole day to do them up for us; she knew nobody else would make them look so nice!’

‘But the waste of time and strength!’

Cynthia mused a moment, then turned to me. ‘Moses, have you ever estimated how much time Friends as well as worldly people devote to the mere adornment of ‘our husks, our outward shells?’

‘Dear me!’ cried Isabel, with a pout. ‘One

might as well look as young and pretty as possible when one is young and—'

'Pretty,' added Cynthia. 'You can't help knowing it, my dear, any better than I can help knowing I am neither. But it gives me no uneasiness, for vanity, Moses, is the most harmless and evanescent of vices.'

Here Sheba entered, followed by the Angora cat.

'Roxana or Isabel has left a diamond ring in the slop jar. I'm sure it isn't Cynthia's.'

'Here, give it to me.' Isabel slipped it on her pretty fore-finger, while her sister remarked:

'There, sis, you know pa said you had better not wear ma's engagement ring. He'd scold well if he knew you were so careless.'

'If you brought her watch I might as well have the ring. I think pa's real mean, anyhow; he says we shan't have handsome watches 'until we are twenty years old. It's well Sheba is honest. The darkies out West are not so very—'

'That point I must argue with you, Moses. Is the African by nature more dishonest than the

white race, or is it an evil resulting from slavery? The assertion is constantly made in their disfavor, and I have never been fully satisfied in my own mind that it is just.'

'Do the darkies here all call white people by their first names? I tell you, pa wouldn't allow that! He's a Democrat to the backbone, and don't believe in all men being free and equal.'

'We belong to the society of Friends, and we believe not in empty titles, calling no man lord and master,' said my wise Peace.

'Ah, I see; that's the ticket! The Quakers are the same as the Shakers and Mormons; ain't they, Mrs. Pittman?'

My shocked Peace cast down her eyes at that ridiculous question, and Cynthia answered promptly: 'Silly girl! The Quakers are the best people in the world, the Mormons are the wickedest and worst. Read Sewel's *History of the Quakers*, or the writings of Fox or John Woolman, and you will see the absurdity of linking the two names together in the same sentence. Charles Lamb said, 'Every Quakeress is a lily!''

'I am sure Mr. Charles Lamb must have known Mrs. Pittman,' said Roxana, casting a repentant look towards my downcast Peace. 'I didn't intend to say anything mean ; when I'm older, perhaps I will know more.'

'We will all hope the same for ourselves,' replied Cynthia. 'No more porridge this morning, Peace ; I have eaten my allowance.'

'Nothing but porridge ? no coffee ? I should die if I didn't have my cup of strong coffee for breakfast !' exclaimed Isabel, as Cynthia pushed back her plate.

'If you wish to have a sound, vigorous constitution, a clear head, and good mind, adopt my regimen. I have not had a day's illness for ten years. My stomach has never been a medicine chest.'

Something in this suggestion, I cannot say what, excited the risibilities of our young friends ; for Roxana, glancing at Isabel, both fell into hysterical, only half-smothered laughter, which was interrupted by Sheba, who entered, and handed me a card : "Mr. John Brisk, New York.'

I stared dumbly at the familiar name of my friend. I knew that the questioning eyes of my Peace were fixed upon me. I dared not raise my own.

‘The man says he’s travelled all night. He looks mighty tired and dusty,’ said our waiting-maid.

‘I bet its another Centennial visitor. Just look at Mr. Pittman’s face!’ cried Isabel.

‘Moses,’ said my true Peace, ‘thee wilt surely ask the Friend to breakfast.’

I rose and hurried out to meet and explain my position to John Brisk, who, after a hearty greeting, paved the way for me in the most thoughtful and unexpected manner.

‘I know you must be crowded,’ he said, ‘and all I can expect is a room to brush up in a little, and I can sleep on the floor, on a table, in a chair, in fact anywhere, for a night or two until the rush is over. If it were at any other time I should not dare to intrude.’

‘But, John Brisk,’ I interrupted, ‘I have given thee an especial invitation.’

‘That is all right, Friend Moses,’ he said, with his good-natured laugh; ‘and Sheba has just told me how the locusts have come upon you, or rather the Western grasshoppers.’

So Sheba had cut the Gordian knot of this difficulty, and conveying the Friend to my own room, after a general brushing and bathing and dusting, he looked quite like himself, and John Brisk, in my opinion, was a well-formed, good-looking specimen of his sex, standing almost six feet in his stockings—having clear, grey eyes, shapely features, and a well-preserved dark moustache and hair.

As I presented him to our visitors I felt that he at once made a favorable impression, and sliding in between Roxana and Isabel very easily and naturally, he ate, talked, and drank his coffee with great celerity, observing that he always traveled by night in order to save time, for time was money.■

‘But then there is no chance of getting up little flirtations with ladies,’ said Roxana.

Really this was going to far. I could not define the exact meaning of the word used with such frank-

ness, but the very sound was unmaidenly, coming from lips young and beautiful.

John laughed immoderately, and Cynthia asked, with deep interest, 'As you always travel by night—'

'And always by express,' adds John.

'—You can inform me whether the perils be greater or less by night than day. How do the statistics stand in regard to accidents?'

John replied that he was not posted in the matter but would try to rub up some information and with pleasure convey it to Cynthia as soon as possible; and I saw that she regarded him as a man of some courtesy and intelligence.

His weariness and fatigue had completely vanished, so we started at once for the Exhibition. I led the way with Cynthia and my Peace; John Brisk followed with a female, also, on either side directing his attention equally to the two girls, who had thrown light gauzy scarfs over their white dresses, and put on hats smothered in garlands of artificial leaves and rose-buds. I resolved to keep close beside them, and act the part of parent toward the daughters of my old friend.

Vain endeavor ! useless resolution ! We were separated at the turnstile as we entered the grounds, and I did not see them again until 8 o'clock in the evening, when the trio, returning home in excellent spirits, declared that they had passed a most delightful day. Isabel had suffered a loss—a large Irish woman in the crowd having clutched and carried away the greater portion of leaves and rose-buds from her hat ; but this trifling accident did not depress her in the least. Having spent the day with my own Peace, I had found an opportunity of confessing how John Brisk had come to our house by my special invitation ; and receiving, as it were, absolution and forgiveness for my hypocrisy, we decided that John must remain with us, and sleep that night on a cot in our tea-room. He was glad enough to accept the offer, as hundreds of poor creatures, I was told, walked the streets all night unable to procure comfortable or uncomfortable lodgings.

As for Cynthia Stonewall, finding it impossible to remain beside us in the crowd, she cast about in

her mind for a good position. Her eyes rested accidentally upon one of the spiral stairways in the main building. Fertile in devising expedients and readily carrying them out, she mounted the steps and reached a desirable altitude. Looking with comparative ease from this observatory, she had been enabled to see all passing within range of her vision.

‘I must confess, Peace,’ I said, ‘Cynthia Stonewall was not so much in my thoughts as those two charming, lovely young creatures.’

‘Moses!’ interrupted my alarmed Peace.

I ventured to say no more at that moment, but secretly resolved to have some plain speaking with John Brisk in regard to those friendless girls entrusted to my care. Was it not eminently proper that I should take them in particular charge? True, my ways might not be worldly, but I knew the meaning of prudence. John Brisk must conduct himself prudently.

CHAPTER IV.

‘Lor, them Heartie girls have brought some style in Moses Pittman’s house! I do dote on sashes!’ I overheard Sheba say, as she picked up a wide blue ribbon in the hall. Isabel had dropped it the previous evening, never missing the ornament. Sheba was examining the sash with evident admiration as I stopped to remonstrate with her upon the foolish and sinful habit of using indiscriminately the word ‘Lor.’

‘I only means lor and commandments, Moses, and nothing more,’ she replied, as I, turning away, entered the tea-room to have a fatherly talk with John Brisk.

He was up, all dressed and bright as a lark, skipping and humming about the room as he gave final twists and brushes to his long moustache and dark hair.

‘John,’ I said, seizing him by a buttonhole, ‘I want thee to make me a solemn promise.’

‘All right, Friend Moses,’ he said, his smile as gay as the May morn.

‘Go alone to the Centennial to-day.’

His face fell visibly; he gave me a glance—searching and somewhat cross.

‘Those innocent young girls have been entrusted to my care by a confiding parent. I would not have them injured by even an appearance of evil.’

‘Does this request come from your wife?’ he asked.

‘Peace believes it will be better for them to remain at home to-day, or go out in her company,’ I replied, with caution.

‘All right, Friend Moses! But no promises after to-day, remember!’

With these words he skipped off, not waiting for breakfast, and we did not expect to see him again until evening. The girls must have been fatigued, in spite of their assurances to the contrary, for when I mentioned that John Brisk would not be with us that day, Roxana declared that her head was almost splitting open, and Isabel exclaimed: ‘You can do

as you please, Rox, but I'm going to rest for this day. The very last thing ma said was, "Now, don't go and tire yourselves to death, and come back looking like two old women." "

But Cynthia was resolved to continue her tour of inspection, and leaving my contented Peace at home, I offered my services as escort for my cousin. But we soon drifted apart after our arrival at the Centennial grounds, her minute investigations and exacting questions becoming very wearisome to me, and she being quite able to take care of herself. Once during the course of the day I caught a glimpse of John Brisk, who chanced to be standing at the entrance of the Japanese department, seemingly absorbed in the contemplation of a beautiful article of furniture. Upon reaching the identical spot, however, he had disappeared and was lost in the crowd. And, somewhat curious to know what had engaged his deep attention, placing myself in the same position, I raised my eyes and found the figure of Moses Pittman reflected in an enormous mirror directly opposite. Soon wearied with wandering

alone, I went home, but John Brisk was before me. There he sat with the girls in our tea-room, and every trace of fatigue and headache had vanished.

'We are going to Thomas' concert to-night. Ain't it nice?' asked Isabel. John Brisk avoided my eye. 'Mrs. Pittman's going with us, too!'

My pious Peace looked troubled.

'Moses, as Friends we have ever eschewed such worldly amusements, but I cannot let the girls go without an elderly companion.'

'And you must go to. Miss Stonewall will go, she said so this morning.' Cynthia came in while Isabel was speaking.

'The Centennial comes but once a century, Moses,' she said, 'and Peace must hear this orchestra.'

'Do, do go, lovely, lovely, nice Mrs. Pittman!' begged Isabel, flinging her arms around the neck of my yielding Peace.

'You will never regret it, I am positive, Mrs. Pittman,' said John Brisk. 'and our pleasure will be greatly increased by your society.'

So, much to my secret amazement, not to say

consternation, we set out for this worldly place of amusement, my unobtrusive Peace wearing her best gown and new bonnet. Our young friends were arrayed in violet silks, with white lace tied around their necks, and with veils of the same material, enhancing but not concealing their charming young countenances; and my eyes, in spite of myself, wandered from my neatly clad Peace and Cynthia in her black alpaca gown and high hat. I would keep a watch upon them that evening, it was plainly my duty so to do; but somehow, while buying our tickets, the young people lost us, how I cannot say, and when we saw them again they were seated quite a distance from us and the music had begun.

Dear Peace closed her eyes. There we sat, like two sparrows among a crowd of gay popinjays and parrots; but annoyance vanished at the sound of the wonderful harmonious strains which greeted our ears. Tears fell softly over the cheeks of my tender Peace; her soul was strangely moved within her; my own was also thrilled.

‘I must say, Beethoven always before Mozart,’

said Cynthia during the intermission ; ‘and as for Wagner’s ragged compositions, future generations may listen to these startling, deafening, crashing sounds with pleasure, but to me it is

“ Wrapping nonsense round

With pomp and darkness, till it seems profound !”

This is “ milk for babes.” Bostonians require and demand a stronger musical bill of fare. That last movement should have concluded pianissimo, the scherzo always fortissimo. These points are, I presume, scarcely heeded by such an audience. Peace, where have those young people gone ?

My Peace opened her eyes, recalled to things terrestrial by this question. We saw that the girls had left the place where they had been sitting, and were now seating themselves at a small round table, and as we looked a waiter brought three glasses of beer and put them before our young friends.

‘ It cannot be beer ! ’ cried Cynthia. ‘ The glasses have straws in them. What a comment upon our institutions ! I will remonstrate ! ’

She rose, crossed the concert room, and I noticed that many persons were observing her with amusement depicted upon their faces. John Brisk smiled ; of course, Roxana pouted, and Isabel frowned as she answered Cynthia's remonstrance very curtly, indeed, and our cousin stalked back to us with the mien of a brigadier-general.

‘I have done my duty ; my advice will not be taken. Moses, have you ever given the subject of total abstinence careful attention? Ah, the music begins. I will hear your answer later.’

She tranquilly disposed herself for the enjoyment of music, but my thoughts were sadly wandering, and the face of my poor Peace was suffused with blushes. But our cousin's equanimity was undisturbed ; she kept time with her head, fingers, and feet, often bowing intelligently to the leader with a smile of comprehensive approbation, or frowning when the rendering was not according to her fancy.

‘Very fair! Very fair!’ she murmured to herself when the concert was concluded, greatly to my relief. The people were dispersing.

‘Peace, it will never do to leave those girls here alone,’ she said; they must go home with us. If they have not been joined by another man!’

An acquaintance of John Brisk, in walking through the place, had met my friend.

‘Two beaux—one for each! It is better, for they would soon have come to blows over one man. Moses, you must go and insist upon their coming with us!’

A sudden calm seemed to fall over their gay spirits as I approached.

‘Peace Pitman says thee must come home now. It is late.’

‘Of course we would not stay here without dear Mrs. Pittman!’ Roxana sprang up. ‘Come, sis!’

‘Let me present my friend, Frederic Milder,’ said John Brisk. I offered my hand to the former who, shaking it languidly, turned, and presented his arm to Isabel; she accepted it as if he had been a life-long friend, John taking care of Roxana. I brought my dutiful Peace and cousin to the party, and we

all walked home, the gentlemen leaving us at the door, receiving no invitation to enter at that late hour, but promising to call on the morrow.

‘Good night, dear, good Mrs. Pittman. I think Philadelphia is a nice, nice place, and you are the very nicest person in it.’

If my proper Peace had prepared a rebuke, it vanished before these affectionate demonstrations.

‘What a girl you are, sis. Don’t you see you are creasing Mrs. Pittman’s lovely shawl!’

A wrinkle more or less gave Isabel little annoyance, but Roxana smoothed out the rough places with care.

‘There, there, I’ve lost my new four-button lavender gloves!’ cried Isabel, with some concern, putting her hand in her empty pocket.

‘I saw that mild young man putting them in his pocket, so it is not worth while to look in yours, remarked Cynthia, yawning.

‘His name isn’t Mild, its Milder,’ said Isabel, with a flush.

‘I should think it might be Mildest. But I am overcome with sleep. I must ask Mr. Brisk to-morrow if New Yorkers really appreciate classical music. I am inclined to believe it is a new fashion, that will die out in a few years.’

‘We won’t go to the Centennial until the afternoon. The gentlemen have asked us to ride in the park. And, dear Mrs. Pittman, won’t you come too? I guess the carriage will hold five!’

‘Are you going in an omnibus? Good night.’

Cynthia, without waiting for an answer to her question, disappeared; she evidently disapproved of the plan. What could be done? Each hour convinced me that these innocent, ignorant young creatures should not be left without some restraint. I would do my best in carrying out their father’s request, but foresaw serious difficulties in its fulfillment. My anxious Peace was filled with doubts and fears.

‘The Centennial comes but once in a century, Peace,’ I said.

‘Yes and three days of their visit have already passed. Our quiet home is strangely altered, Moses. And then Florence Bellefair, thy distant kinswoman, she is yet to come.’

I had well-nigh forgotten that fact, occupied with so many distracting thoughts.

‘I think the girls have prepared me somewhat for that visitor,’ said my reflective Peace. ‘She surely cannot belong more to the gay world than these thoughtless young creatures.’

‘That, my Peace, is not easy for me to say.’

CHAPTER V.

An unexpected accident prevented Cynthia from going to the Centennial grounds the next day. In inspecting our kitchen range, going too near the heated iron, her linen ulster caught fire ; with infinite presence of mind she held the blazing garment in her hands until the flame was extinguished, heroically enduring the fire like a martyr without a whimper, and rescuing the linen ulster at the expense of badly scorched fingers. My Peace bound up the wounds with sweet oil and lime water, and as Cynthia was, for the present, laid aside from active pursuits, my handy Peace offered to repair the rent in the burnt garment.

The girls heard the news of the accident with great concern, growing very nervous over what might have resulted.

‘Thee must give up the Centennial for to-day, Cynthia.’ So saying, my Peace brought out her

work-basket as our cousin remarked—‘How much of our pain is merely imaginary! that is the question, Moses, I am considering.’

I hoped its consideration would alleviate the smart, and telling her this, I prepared to spend a few hours at my office, and left the family tranquilly pursuing different feminine employments—my obliging Peace patching Cynthia’s gown, the two girls smoothing out tangled ribbons and laces, while our cousin sat with bandaged hands reading aloud the news from the morning paper.

I returned in due time to dinner but we had barely seated ourselves at table before the door opened, and John Brisk entered with a lady clinging helplessly to his left arm.

She had been young, and perchance fair, but time had left its sad traces on the careworn face, which were not to be concealed by the aids of pearl powder and carmine. Her figure was willowy and graceful; she wore a black gown conspicuously trimmed with white and a youthful hat, turned up at one side

and at the back; and trimmed with a heavy white plume; long, black ear-rings dangled from her ears, and large white cross suspended on a black ribbon depended from her throat.

‘Cousin Moses,’ said the figure (her voice was very low and musical), ‘it is not possible that time has so changed me! Have you forgotten Florence!’

I rose immediately, but before I could speak my prompt Peace said, ‘I welcome thee, Cousin Florence!’

‘And this is Peace!’ she said. ‘And these?’—she glanced at our visitors.

‘Centennial guests, who have met for the first and last time in this century, said Cynthia. ‘I am Cynthia Stonewall of Boston; these are Western friends—Roxana and Isabel Heartie.’

‘Ladies, I am exceedingly happy to meet you all,—she made a graceful bow, ‘and I am greatly indebted to this gentleman, who was kind enough to bring us to the very house I was seeking.’ She

sank upon the lounge. 'And now that I am safely here, I fear my visit is most inopportune.'

'Nay, Florence, ways and means will be found,' 'Dear, sweet Mrs. Pittman,' cried Isabel, 'Rox and I can sleep on cots in the tea-room, and this lady shall have our bed,' she suggested. This is the sweetest, dearest little Quaker house in the world, and you cannot find a place to creep in anywhere, they tell me.'

'My friends are very welcome to such accommodations as my house affords.' I offered my hand to Florence Bellefair.

'Nay, but thee must stay,' said my courteous Peace; 'a refusal will sadly mar our enjoyment.'

Meanwhile, our well-cooked dinner was growing cold; two extra plates having been put on the table, John quietly appropriated one for himself between the two girls, leaving a place for the widow on my right side.

'By the way, Mr. Brisk,' said Cynthia, 'can you tell me if any New Yorker spends more than five

minutes at a time in eating? Mind, I do not include the time passed in sitting around a table, but that actually consumed in the act of eating. I am no gourmandizer, as you may have observed, but I do believe in eating well-prepared, properly-cooked food in a rational manner.'

'Madame,' said John Brisk, very solemnly, 'the New Yorkers take time but for one thing.'

'And that?'' inquired Cynthia, with deep interest.

'They buy and sell in a hurry,' answered John, 'they walk in a hurry, they talk, eat, sleep, read, write, and think in a hurry; they always travel, if possible, by express. But the dinner waits, the bargain is delayed, church service is neglected, the funeral ceremony or marriage sacrament is postponed while the New Yorker is dressing. They consequently have the reputation of being the best-dressed people in this country, and they cannot afford to lose it.'

Cynthia looked incredulous over this assertion, but continued, 'I am seeking other information.

Pray tell me, is the present demand for classical music a mere fashion or the result of a cultivated taste?' she asked.

'I can only say that we *seem* to like it. *Why* I cannot explain, Madame.'

'But a love for true art comes from appreciation, and that necessarily follows cultivation,' she interrupted.

John Brisk shook his head.

'As you say,' continued Cynthia, reflectively, 'they are always in a hurry. Art is long—the best art the longest. It cannot be taught or learned in a day, or a month, or a year. It is true a critic may lead the mass, as sheep follow a leader. But the true taste cannot be ingrained as it must be when there is thorough and careful training from infancy, as we find it among the Germans and Italians. Our nation is such a cosmopolitan conglomeration I often wonder if we have or ever can have any originality or individuality in painting or music. We have, as it were, been only feeling and handling the froth.'

‘Or the scum,’ said John Brisk, with a laugh.

‘And how then is it possible for the New Yorker to enjoy the grand harmonies and intricate compositions of the old masters?’

‘That I cannot say. “Sometimes the vulgar see and judge aright,”’ said John, and the entrance of our latest guest closed the discussion.

‘Florence comported herself with an appearance of careful juvenility quite remarkable, as all traces of genuine girlishness had long since vanished; but I must allow that her manner was well-bred and refined, and her voice and intonations exceedingly soft and musical. Scarcely were we again comfortably seated at the table, when a confused and loud tumult on the stairs caused me to start up from my chair alarmed. A scrambling and scratching, kicking and thumping was heard; then the door of the dining-room was flung violently open, and Sheba, excited and panting for breath, retreated to a corner, followed by Puss, who was hurled in precipitately after our maid and landed in John Brisk’s lap, where

in fright and terror the poor dumb beast fastened one paw in John's fine moustache.

'Angels and ministers of grace defend me!' he cried, striving to extricate this valuable but vain appendage from the cat's claws.

'My boy! my noble Montague! I had quite forgotten him!' cried Florence, clasping her hands with a very tragic air. 'I left him playing in the street. Come hither, my son!'

A beautiful boy of ten stood on the threshold, clad in a black velvet jacket, over which long, curling golden locks floated almost to his waist. A wide lace ruffle heightened his delicate skin and set off his well-formed features, although his face was at that moment swollen and distorted with rage.

'The nigger wouldn't get out of my way,' he cried, 'so I just throw'd the cat at her back.'

'We sat in expressive silence, then Roxana bursting into a loud peal of laughter, we all involuntarily joined, despite ourselves, the terrified cat, and trembling Sheba. I have said *all*; I must except Cyn-

thia Stonewall, for when I glanced at her face, I saw that it expressed unqualified indignation and disapprobation of such summary proceedings.

‘Is that your son, Madame?’ she turned to Florence.

‘It is my darling. Come hither, Montague!’ said Florence. The boy stood stock still—staring from one person to another.

‘It is well for him that he is not mine at this moment!’ Cynthia’s voice was almost fierce.

‘You are not married,’ I believe,’ replied Florence, in sweet tones.

‘Sheba, bring a plate,’ said my Peace. ‘Little boy, thee must be hungry—here is some very nice pie.’

Her gentle voice and soothing words attracted him; he came forward rather shyly, then putting out his little hand, he looked straight up in my dear Peace’s face for a moment.

‘I like you,’ he said.

‘Then thee must sit beside me and have a good

dinner. But first thee must make me a firm promise,' replied my crafty Peace.

'I will do anything you want me to,' said the boy, with decision.

'God might have made thee with a black skin, then Sheba might have called thee nigger. So thee must never say nigger again to good Sheba.'

'Kiss me first, then I'll promise,' said Montague, and my affectionate Peace, with a tear in her blue eye, stooped down and kissed him, while the rest of the company fixed their eyes upon their plates. Florence broke the silence by remarking in a low voice to me :

'He has inherited many noble qualities from his lamented father ! Too lofty for this sphere, his brave spirit was summoned hence in the bloody battle of Gettysburg—that field where the blood of Southern chivalry ran like water, where the lost cause surrendered its most courageous and indomitable chiefs !'

Her voice had unconsciously grown louder; the ears of all present were now listening.

'Fiddlesticks! Woman, you began the war,' cried Cynthia.

'Dear me! Indeed, I did not,' said Florence, mildly, with a grieved air.

'I mean you—your people. The first shot was fired at Sumter, upon the stars and stripes. That flag you would have torn in sunder, you took——'

'The stripes and left you the stars,' interrupted Florence.

'Mamma didn't, I say! Mamma can't fire a gun! She didn't tear the flag! The Yankees done all the mischief! I've heard all about it lots of times. They stole our niggers.' He glanced askance at Peace as he used the obnoxious word. 'And they killed my papa, and if Boston had been sunk in the water we wouldn't have had no war at all.'

John Brisk rapped on the table.

'Hear! Hear! An F. F. V. has the floor!' he cried.

‘My Montague has a remarkable brain. I fear it will develop too rapidly, Cousin Moses. Florence turned to me.

‘Such are apt to run early to seed,’ murmured Cynthia.

‘Look here, my boy, I am a Yankee—a real, live Yankee. Don’t I look like one?’ said John Brisk, rising to his full height.

‘No, but she does.’ Montague pointed to Cynthia, and then, looking at his mother,’ he added: ‘Mamma, one of your curls has fallen on your shoulder! You don’t wear curls,’ continued the child, as Florence restored the false lock to its place with some little confusion.

I think my good Peace had been silently praying for wisdom at this most extraordinary crisis. She was a woman of few words, and rarely spoke in meeting, but her eyes meeting mine, she rose and said:

‘My friends are all welcome here; that is understood. We belong to a Society opposed to wars

and tumults. Let us have only harmonious subjects for conversation, so that when we separate there will remain only pleasant memories of this Centennial visit.' She resumed her seat.

'I vow, Mrs. Pittman, that is the best Centennial speech I have yet heard,' said John; 'and whoever violates such a request, coming from such a source, is not worthy the name of an American!'

'I am sure pa and ma wouldn't want us to talk politics with any one who didn't agree with us,' said Roxana. 'Pa always says he never treads on people's toes, if they only let him alone.'

If I have hurt any one's feelings unwittingly, I beg pardon,' added Florence; but Cynthia remained silent as the grave, being convinced in her own mind of the infallibility of her personal convictions.

So the meal was concluded quite amicably. Florence, fatigued by her journey, retired to take a nap; the young gentlemen came for the girls, in a carriage holding four, and room for no more, and while I stood beside the window watching

them as they drove gayly away, Cynthia came and questioned with great earnestness :

‘ Do you suppose, Moses, that Southern women have backbone ? And tell me, if you can, how far principle should be sacrificed to courtesy ? ’

‘ They are doubtless vertebrated, being human creatures. The latter question I leave a Bostonian to decide. ’

‘ They seldom miss the mark, Moses. ’

‘ Providence has largely favored them in bestowing such universal discretion and penetration, ’ I remarked. ‘ I trust they are duly grateful. ’

‘ In gratitude, I must confess, they are deficient. By contact with other people they prove their immense superiority—the fact is forced upon them, *nolens volens*. Now, see the effects of the deadly Upas tree of slavery upon this woman and her badly-trained son. What kind of manhood can we expect from such boyhood ! ’

I replied that he seemed to be a boy of good parts, although somewhat spoiled by an indulgent mother. But Cynthia shook her head.

Our young friends did not return in time for tea, and at table Cynthia saw that Montague ate what pleased him best—at first in silence—but after the boy had taken a third biscuit, regarding the warm bread as pernicious and poisonous, she ventured to remonstrate with his parent. ‘I have not had a day’s illness for ten years; and think of it, my diet for breakfast and supper is simply oatmeal porridge and milk.’

‘I once lived on Indian meal porridge, *without* milk, with no *salt*, for one year,’ replied Florence, calmly. ‘I could do this again, if necessary. The day may come when Montague will be obliged to do the same. So I indulge him now.’

Cynthia said no more. In simplicity of diet she had been excelled by a Southern woman, a creature with no backbone, who, however, made no merit out of her necessity; and our Boston cousin, musing over the fact, went to the grey room at an early hour, where my ingenious Peace had devised and erected, by means of a large screen, a sort of Mason and Dixon’s line between our guests, ‘a middle

wall of partition,' which we fervently hoped Montagne would not be tempted to knock or kick over.

By nine o'clock, accompanied by the two young men, our guests, returned.

'We have had a beautiful drive by moonlight in the park, haven't we, Mr. Milder?' asked Isabel, with a confiding glance at that gentleman.

'Ah, yaas—yaas, quite so ! quite so !' he replied, twisting his long fair whiskers in imitation of John Brisk. Indeed it seemed that he was a shadow or echo of my young friend. When John laughed, Frederic smiled ; if John sat down, Frederic did the same ; in fact he was a puppet, of good appearance and some breeding, and wearing very modish garments.

'I declare Fairmount Park is very attractive, more so even than our Central,' said John, very candidly.

'Pon honor ! 'pon honor ! I believe it is,' echoed Frederic, holding his diamond-ringed little finger so that the light would fall on the brilliant.

'After one has seen the vastness of the grounds

and the size of the buildings, there is really little at the Exhibition that cannot be seen somewhere in New York. Three days will do for the Centennial,' added John.

'Yaas, yaas! Time enough, quite, 'pon my honor, after a man has seen Tiffany's,' said Frederic.

I did not press them to remain later when they rose to depart. 'Peace,' I said, 'Frederic Milder has an odd impediment in his speech.'

CHAPTER VI.

Carrying her small satchel in hand, containing her lunch, and a bottle of sweet oil and lime water, Cynthia left our house bright and early the following day. The girls had not confided their plans and consulted with my cautious Peace. Not being able to inquire what wild scheme might be in progress, I offered my services as escort for the day, but they had formed other entirely different arrangements as we had suspected, and with many thanks declined our company.

Accompanied by Florence, Montague, and my Peace, we therefore left them at home ; but a few steps from my door, whom should we meet but the two young men with cigars in their mouths, walking arm in arm toward our house.

‘John Brisk,’ I said, detaining him, ‘I request a few moments’ private conversation with thee.’

My companions going ahead, Frederic dropped John's arm, and I continued, with much gravity: 'John, this matter is going too far. The attentions toward one of my friend's daughters are marked. If this is to serve thee only for passing pleasure, I beg thee will immediately desist.'

He took the cigar from his mouth, and his face grew as grave as my own. •

'The ladies think no more of my attentions than they do of yours, Moses Pittman,' he said.

'But I am a married man. I have one wife—'

'You see,' he interrupted, 'they are young and pretty, and attract fellows wherever they go; so they are quite used to this sort of thing, which is incomprehensible to a man of your quiet life and habits. They are just like a hundred other girls, only a trifle prettier, or more innocent. As for evil—why, it runs as easily from them as drops of water from a duck's back; and as to frankness—why, they wouldn't hold a candle to our New York girls, who flirt, drink, smoke, and swear with the

men sometimes, and are not thought the worse for it either. I'm going home in a few days.'

'A few days!' I groaned inwardly.

'And after I go, the fair Roxana will never bestow another thought upon me, I dare say.'

It was of Roxana, then, that he was thinking!

'Depend upon it, we understand each other. I promise you I shall not trifle with her affections. The ladies are waiting for you on the corner.'

He raised his hat, and I regained my companions somewhat reassured by his confident way of speaking, although my mind was not yet at ease. But I knew little of worldly ways.

The day proved to be a very tedious one. Unlike Cynthia, Florence Bellefair was satisfied with a very cursory examination of the Exhibition, carrying no note-book and asking but few questions, excepting in French, speaking to several foreigners in the various departments in that tongue. I suggested a riding chair, but she said they were not comfortable, she was very sure. Finding that she clung persistently to my arm, my conceding Peace

proposed taking tea with Florence, agreeing with her and leaving me an hour in the Chinese department. At an appointed time, I meandered slowly along with her, so separately, thinking that her vivacious, sprightly, young companion, ill suited a woman of her years and experience. Florence passed by the various products and arts here collected from every nation on the civilized globe with utter indifference, lingering only near a case of French garments, which seemed to please her fancy; and coming suddenly upon a regiment of French dolls, tricked out in all the absurdities and extravagance of modern fashion, she paused and regarded them with exclamations of admiration and delight. Observing from time to time that she threw glances over one shoulder, I, looking in the same direction, saw an elderly, grey-bearded man of foreign appearance standing behind us, and apparently pleased with the pleasure of my companion. I moved away from the spot as soon as possible, and feeling by this time the need of refreshing 'the inner man,' I proposed eating something at

a respectable Philadelphia luncheon-room. But Florence, at a Vienna café, I conceived begging to be taken. A waiter was executing her sentence; and while he remarked that the same elderly elaborate waiter seated himself quite near us.

For as in Moses, that gentleman, I am sure, is a foreigner of high rank; and he has followed me here!' she whispered.

'Florence Bellefair!' I exclaimed, sternly. She cast down her eyes, and, clasping her little hands, said, with a helpless air, 'I cannot help it! Indeed, I cannot! It has always been so. If heaven has given me the '*je ne sais-quoi*,' am I to blame?'

'This is no Genesee squaw, Florence,' I replied, rising and turning my back upon the person in question; it proved broad enough to serve as a screen from impertinent and offensive interest.

'The man is not an Indian,' I pursued, and despatched my meal with great haste, anxious to leave the spot. But Florence sat diddling with her spoon and sipping her coffee for a good half-hour, and from certain glances she cast over my left shoulder

I was sure the obnoxious man was still there. As Providence would have it, however, the waiter requesting us to make room for other parties, we were compelled to rise ; and to my surprise and anger, the man also rose and followed us at a respectful distance. Expostulation with Florence was useless she being no simple, innocent young girl, ignorant of the ways of the world. So we wandered on, my wrath momentarily increasing, for I was assured by certain movements of my kinswoman that the distinguished foreigner still hovered in our rear. We stumbled upon Cynthia in a chair ; her hands being still bandaged, she had chosen this means of locomotion as better adapted for her purposes. Her notebook was lying idle in her lap, I supposed ; but just then she stopped her propelling driver, and handing him her book and pencil, I saw that he was writing at her dictation.

‘ Ah, Moses, ’ she cried, recognizing us, ‘ I saw Peace just now with the boy, who is amusing himself by running up and down the spiral stairs. He threw a bread crust on my hat ; I took no notice of

it, but other people may. And I caught a peep at the girls having a good time in the French restaurant with the two young men. Good-bye !'

'*Au revoir !*' murmured Florence, as Cynthia was rolled away.

I longed to go at once to the rescue of my sorely tried Peace, but this was impossible. I dared not leave Florence alone ; and if we left the appointed rendezvous my disappointed Peace, coming there, would probably miss us. I could therefore only possess my soul in patience.

Finding a stool for Florence, I paced to and fro before her, knowing that the distinguished Frenchman was within sight, although I did not deign to bestow a single look upon him ; and the slow moments passed away until my punctual Peace appeared. Then leading Montague by the hand and looking neither to the right nor left, I quitted the building as quickly as possible.

'Thee hast had a troubled day, Peace ?' I questioned, when we were alone.

'And thee, Moses ?'

'Florence is a simple, if not a wanton, woman,' I replied, and thereupon related the history of that day.

'Nay, Moses,' said my cautious Peace. 'Florence is a clinging vine; she craves a sturdy oak to lean upon.'

'She may seek it elsewhere,' I answered, in some haste.

To my surprise all of our guests appeared at the tea-room that evening, including the two young men, and the conversation naturally falling upon what they had seen at the Exhibition, Isabel, who was unusually quiet, suddenly exclaimed—

'Oh, dear Mrs. Pittman! Did you see General Washington's false teeth?'

John Brisk shrugged his shoulders.

'A good card for an enterprising dentist!' he said.

'Yaas, yaas, extremely so, indeed,' murmured his friend Frederic.

'Such funny, big, awkward things as they were, too,' added Isabel.

'We are a practical people,' pursued John.' Our hero was toothless ; he could not tell a lie, and perhaps would not have objected to letting all the world know that he found it necessary to employ artificial aid in the proper mastication of his food.'

'Yaas, yaas, highly proper, very much so.'

'I am glad to see you take this view,' said Cynthia, finishing her last spoonful of porridge. 'It is sensible and practical, and, as Mr. Milder observes, highly proper.'

'Cousin Moses, in the public exhibition of the article in question there is something, I must confess, exceedingly offensive to refined taste.' Florence turned to me.

'Yet, Madame,' called Cynthia from the other side of the table, 'consider one moment. George Washington was incapable of falsehood. Compelled by necessity to make use of artificial ornaments, we will say he would not have blushed could he have foreseen that they would have been dragged out from their resting-place at the end of the century, and displayed as a relic of our hero before the eyes of six million people.'

‘That would be twelve million eyes, allowing two for each person,’ said Florence, in a low voice.

Cynthia rose. ‘No, I will not cavil over this. I can find other causes for deeper regret and disapprobation. Look, for instance, at the so-called Centennial caps, sold at fifty cents apiece! The material base, the shape common, the design a vulgar caricature of Washington! Where is the American who will carefully preserve such a disgraceful relic of our lauded Centennial to hand down to succeeding generations? Is this the best specimen of our art in the nineteenth century? Who can show me an American relic from our Exhibition that is worth purchasing?’

‘Why, I have a real pretty ground-glass slipper. Sis, you brought a match-safe and silk bookmark, and a real nice braid of colored sewing silk for mending gloves,’ said Roxana. But Cynthia continued, taking out her note book :

‘This is what I have written after three day’s close studied observation, or, I should more properly say, it was written to-day by my—’

'Propeller,' suggested John, as Cynthia read aloud.

'The American Exhibition—a gigantic speculation, agitated under pretence of patriotism for the purpose of promoting specie payment and distracting the attention of the nation from grave questions and present threatening evils. Also a gratification of our inordinate self-glorification. I see my propeller has spelt some of the words wrong.'

'I think it's a real nice place, if it wasn't for the Turkey men who stare at us so. And the concert was lovely to-day,' said Isabel.

'That music need not be criticized,' added Cynthia, with a lofty wave of her hand. 'To-day I was present at the unveiling of a statue. An excellent speech was first made, short and to the point. When the veil was removed, what did we see?'

'A statue,' said Isabel.

'A big black bear!' cried Montague, who was listening with interest.

'The statue,' resumed Cynthia. 'And before,

behind, to the right and the left, ranged around, were exhibitors with their wares ready for sale.'

'They, like Nero, would gild the statue of Lysippus,' said John. 'I will here remark,' he continued, 'that we may regard our Centennial as an immense advertising medium, or as a vast Noah's ark, filled with strange and wonderful animals from all parts of the globe.'

'Capital hit, Jack! Capital, very!' said Fred-eric, stroking his moustache.

'I don't see how, as Americans, you can run down your country so!' cries Roxana. 'I don't believe you would find an American huntress or butter woman anywhere else in the world, and the big California trees, and the dear little grottos in the park, so retired and cool.'

'And the overskirts, Rox,' said Isabel, 'they almost kill me!'

'I know it was butter, for I stuck my fingers in to see!' cried Montague.

'My darling, how could you?' Florence cast a reproachful glance at the boy, which was unheeded,

for pointing to Cynthia, who was still standing in an oratorical position, he demanded :

‘Is she Stonewall Jackson?’

Every one laughed, and Cynthia also smiling serenely, I felt sure that the question was not unpleasant. Doubtless, to the boy, the person named was the hero of heroes, and our cousin retiring early to her own side of Mason and Dixon’s line, Florence with the boy soon followed, leaving me with the four young people.

I observed with pleasure a marked change in their deportment. Roxana and Isabel were more maidenly and shy, and the young men far more respectful and reserved. As John Brisk left the house he grasped my hand with much friendliness.

‘By the way, Friend Moses, I have decided to remain here until I receive a letter I am expecting now daily.’

Pleased with his modest demeanor, I said :

‘I am glad our city amuses thee so well, John. Hitherto New York has meted out scant praise to Philadelphia.’

John laughed. 'Oh, Philadelphia is coming on ; in time you will do very well, indeed. Fred will probably stay with me. The truth is, we can both get away for a two weeks' vacation now, business being horribly dull. So as soon as I receive the letter, I may run off for a jaunt somewhere.'

He had evidently been meditating over my advice and putting it into action. John Brisk in many respects was a very estimable young man.

'Moses, thee must consider the best way of spending First day,' said my devout Peace. 'If Florence does not object, we will carry the boy to meeting with us. Montague is often too much for her shattered nerves, and for all the religious training he has received he is little better than a heathen.'

The child had won his way into the heart of my loyal Peace, and, admitted within the fortress of her affections, dislodgement would be difficult. Reposing confidence in her discretion and understanding, I would not gainsay her wishes or raise any objection to them.

CHAPTER VII.

The permission of Florence was readily obtained, and when First day came my Peace and I were thankful that all our guests were piously inclined, the young girls attending morning, afternoon and evening services in various places of worship in company with John Brisk and Frederic Milder; Florence, also belonging to the Episcopal fold, leaving her boy to our care, repaired to her chosen sanctuary, and Cynthia requested permission to accompany us to Quaker Meeting.

The day was not fine; the spirit may have been willing, but the flesh was weak; or, our Friends having nothing to suit the condition of any present, we remained in solemn and expressive silence. My holy Peace sat with eyes closed, holding one of Montague's hands in her own. For some time, impressed by the plain attire and unfamiliar faces, he

was very still, his eyes wandering from one countenance to another in mute wonder ; then growing restless, he yawned, sighed, wriggled, twisted, and shuffled his feet, until Cynthia's patience becoming severely tried, she, stretching her arms behind my Peace, tapped the boy's shoulder with the handle of her umbrella.

'You'd better not do that again !' cried Montague, with an angry face, and not a little scandalizing the devout assembly and my disturbed Peace, who, moving up in the seat, placed him beyond the reach of our cousin. Subsiding into silence, he so remained until by accident a fly settling on the end of my unconscious Peace's nose, he raised his hand, and with a gentle slap drove it away. Soon after this, to my relief, the meeting was over, without further disturbance from the boy.

'An hour's reflection is better by far than an hour's attention to many a sermon,' observed Cynthia, as we walked towards home. 'How long, Moses, can the mind dwell undisturbed upon one subject? Have you ever in meeting timed your thoughts.'

In truth, concentration of mind is difficult forme, my thoughts flying often wildly after the vanities and vagaries which so habitually beset the soul of man.

‘A Quaker’s meeting is a dove-cote,’ she continued; ‘no jarring discussions, no knotty doctrines to split upon, no racking, self-tormenting questions!’

‘Will thee not turn Quakeress, Cynthia?’ asked my amused Peace.

‘Too late for Cynthia Stonewall,’ she returned, walking ahead with my wife as Friend Hicks joined me—a man of worldly substance, a widower with five children—and we could overhear my kinswoman’s conversation, which was always sensible, I must confess, and very much to the point.

‘A woman of intelligent parts,’ observed Friend Hicks.

‘My kinswoman, Cynthia Stonewall of Boston, to my knowledge has never been guilty of a simple or indiscreet action,’ I rejoined.

He said that was high praise to bestow upon any

mortal woman ; and we separated at our door, and I did not give him another thought until the same evening, when, returning alone from meeting, my Peace having remained at home, Friend Hicks again joined me, and without preliminaries he asked 'Is Cynthia Stonewall still with thee, Friend Moses ?'

I, wondering at his curiosity, answered in the affirmative.

'She is sensible ; she can be silent ; she could train and discipline children ; she has passed her youth ; she is not comely. Perchance she is rich ?' he said.

'Nay ; she ekes out a comfortable and respectable existence on \$300 per annum,' I replied. 'She is not without fine qualities, being truthful, honest, sincere, and possessing a clear mind.

'Why should I seek further ? Such virtues are not found in every woman,' he added, with much satisfaction. 'Now present my wishes, and do well by me. Say to Cynthia Stonewall that she pleases me so well I would make her my wife, the part-

ner of my substance, which is not inconsiderable, the head of my family and the mother of my children.

‘Stay,’ I cried. ‘She is not a Friend.’

‘That will come in good time,’ he answered. ‘But Friend Pittman, I beg thee will do well by me in this matter!’

He was resolved and obstinate in his purpose, and I parted with him, my mind being greatly perturbed. If possible, I would keep the matter secret from my penetrating Peace, and not lay it before Cynthia until the last day of her visit.

Meanwhile, to my great perplexity, I discovered that Florence had in some way formed an acquaintance with the distinguished Frenchman who had signalled her out by his attentions. She no longer accepted my services at the Exhibition, but went and returned alone. Roxana declared that Mrs. Bellefair had been seen clinging to the arm of a foreign gentleman, and describing him, I immediately recognized the obnoxious Frenchman. ‘In this matter we are powerless,’ I said, in despair.

‘The Centennial comes but once in a century!’ So said my watchful Peace, as Florence prepared for the Grounds, leaving Montague behind in our charge, my Peace offering no objections. It was true, his brain was very fertile in devising mischief—attempting to immerse the Angora cat in a tub of water, strewing bread-crumbs over the spotless backyard, feeding the doves on forbidden dainties, coaxing Sheba to permit him to slide down the banisters, and bringing in several uncleanly and ill-bred boys from the street for his playmates. But my patient Peace forgave all, taking him to her affectionate heart, it seemed to me, in place of the little son whom it had pleased God to give and then take away after a brief life in this world, and day by day I noted how she gained an influence over the neglected child by the wonderful power of her love.

CHAPTER VIII.

'Our last day! dear, good Mrs. Pittman!' cried Isabel. 'I would like to live and die in Philadelphia, in a little house just like this.'

John Brisk was still with us, the expected important letter not having been received, and Frederic Milder lingered with his friend.

'It's been the nicest visit of my life,' she added, with a deep sigh, for the thought of the coming separation really seemed to weigh heavily on the mind of the young, thoughtless creature.

'Indeed, we were all quite depressed in spirit, for although our visitors had occasioned me no little anxiety in various ways, yet when the hour of parting came I should find it hard to 'speed away our guests.' Conversation languished, and my thoughts were diverted from their sad channel by Sheba, who, entering, handed me three letters, one for Madame Florence Bellefair, another for the girls

and the last for myself, addressed in Thomas Heartie's writing.

'Mine is from Pa, and, oh dear! yours is too.' Roxana glanced at the writing.

'Dear Mrs. Pittman, I'm so faint! The room is so warm—do excuse me for one moment!'

She indeed looked very pale as she hastily left the room, carrying her letter with her.

'I think I must see what is the matter with Rox.'

With this, Isabel followed her sister; I handed Florence's letter to her. Cynthia glancing at it, observed:

'That Certainly is a foreign hand, Mrs. Bellefair.'

'I have several French correspondents,' said Florence.

'Do you write and speak French?', Cynthia looked at her incredulously.

'Oh, yes, I have spoken French as far back as I can remember,' replied Florence.

'But I always liked Italian better. I have a very

good ear for languages, my master always told me. '

'And have you also Italian correspondents?' continued Cynthia, bent on getting information, and very much surprised at our kinswoman's accomplishments.

'No, not at present.' Florence slipped the letter in her pocket; she looked so pale and anxious that Cynthia exclaimed with some concern :

'You are as pale as a ghost. You Southern women have not much stamina. I fear you are completely exhausted by mere sight-seeing.'

'Perhaps not.' Florence turned like a hunted animal at bay. 'No one can say what may not be done when the trial comes. I did not know that I could for two hours stand, as it were, between the firing of Northern and Southern guns—carrying young and helpless children and infants in my arms from one place of shelter to another, exposed every instant to peril and death. The shot whistled by my ears. Three times I tripped up and stumbled

over a fallen soldier—a friend—a relative it may have been ; we dared not stop then to find out.’

The delicate frame of the widow trembled with excited emotions. Cynthia fixed her steady gaze upon her, as if fascinated by a basilisk.

‘Thank God, *that* is over now!’ Florence clasped her hands and raised her eyes. ‘I dare not dwell on the horrible past ; I leave my future in His hands !’

She disappeared. I looked up at my thunder-struck Peace. John’s face was scarlet with, I believed, honest sympathy. Frederic Milder stroked his moustache, and tried hard to force a blush of indignation.

‘I beg your pardon !’ Cynthia’s voice was quite humble. ‘Peace, I did not intend to violate your treaty, and there is more in your kinswoman than I imagined. I do not speak of my knowledge of four languages, not including Latin, but I certainly never should have supposed she was sufficiently mistress of two to be able to sustain a correspondence in either tongue.’

'Bostonians are unfortunate in having been taught from youth up that all outsiders are Goths and Vandals, Scots, Picts, and Huns,' said John.

'Ah, yaas, yaas, Jack! But hard—pretty hard hit, upon my honor,' echoed Frederic Milder, by some unaccountable mistake rising before his friend. 'And the air is close. Really, very, very!'

John coughed, and thought a little fresh air or stroll would revive him; they would soon come back. I did not doubt this in the least.

'Poor young man! He has a sad impediment in his speech; he finds it difficult to enunciate even in his mother tongue.'

'Peace,' answered Cynthia, 'that is the proper New York dandy drawl. I should know it if I heard the sound in the pyramids of Egypt.'

'Is there no cure for it?' asked my innocent Peace. 'Moses, thee hast not yet opened the letter.'

I gave one glance at the contents. They were very brief, and to the point.

‘Read it aloud, Moses,’ commanded Peace. I obeyed:

‘FRIEND MOSES :—Please telegraph as soon as received—the ages, personal appearance, habits, and business of John Brisk and Frederic Milder, of New York. Having requested my daughters in marriage, they refer me to you for credentials, etc. Love to the girls.

‘Yours, &c.,

THOMAS HEARTIE.’

I gazed vacantly at my speechless Peace.

‘Just what might have been expected!’ exclaimed Cynthia. ‘Moses, there is but one thing for you to do, and that must be done instantly.’

A light dawned across my bewildered mind. This then was the letter which detained John Brisk in Philadelphia.

‘Write down as follows,’ dictated Cynthia:

“John Brisk—age, twenty-five; appearance, good; habits, proper; business, flour broker.”

I wrote mechanically, at her bidding. ‘Frederic Milder?’

‘Ditto,’ exclaimed Cynthia. ‘That is not an expensive telegram, and sufficiently comprehensive.’

‘Cynthia, can these young persons know their own minds. The courtship is very unlike our own, dear Peace,’ I replied. She smiled, conveying to me by this assurance that her recollections of my time of probation were not disagreeable.

‘It may be the way of worldly people, or it may not happen again for one hundred years,’ she said.

‘Send your telegram at once, Moses,’ urged Cynthia. ‘And don’t waste any sentiment, Peace, over their future happiness or misery. These sudden violent fancies go as quickly as they come.’

Friend Hicks’ proposal suddenly occurred to my mind. Should I broach the subject then and there. My courage failed. I would delay this disagreeable duty until the last moment, I resolved, as I left the house with the telegram in my pocket. And my Peace went to the two girls and found them, as she afterwards told me, weeping in each other’s arms. She took a hand of each, saying :

‘Dear Roxana and Isabel, marriage is a very serious matter, and should not be entered into rashly or unadvisedly.’

‘Didn’t you get married, dear Mrs. Pittman?’ said the sobbing Isabel. ‘And pa and ma must have been engaged some time, and it is as mean as can be for them to scold us. How could we help what has happened?’

‘Thee must confess, dear girls, it is very sudden.’

‘I always believed in love at first sight.’ She wiped her eyes. ‘Before I was even introduced to Mr. Milder I knew we were made for each other.’

‘Ah! but marriage is serious,’ began my argumentative Peace.

‘Married! married! I don’t want to be married,’ cried Roxana. ‘I only want to be engaged.’

‘I wouldn’t think of such a thing,’ added Isabel. ‘No, not for ever so many years! Of course I should not.’

Arguments were useless. My philosophic Peace smoothed out their tangled hair, kissed their flushed, tear-stained cheeks and sent them to bed, and in

our agitation and amazement over recent events we scarcely gave a thought to our poor kinswoman, Florence Bellefair.

I found the young men awaiting me with much impatience, hoping to hear something relating to my letter ; but not a word of satisfaction did they receive from me, I entertaining them to the best of my ability by conversing on the Centennial Exhibition. Their thoughts seemed wandering, however, and finding at last after an hour or two rolled by rather wearily that the girls were not visible, they left me with reluctance, not daring to frame in words the questions I am sure they were anxious to ask ; and with some pleasure I closed the door upon them without having broached the subject.

‘Ah, Peace,’ I said, ‘if worldly neighbors could know what has passed under our roof within the last week they would surely pronounce Peace Pittman a finished match-maker.’

‘Nay, Moses,’ she demurred, ‘I have had no hand in this matter. The young men were the invited guests of Moses Pittman.’

CHAPTER IX.

A loud knock on our chamber door aroused us the following morning. Asking who was there, a child's voice answered :

‘I want my mamma !’

My Peace arose, opening the blinds to admit the light ; we saw that the sun was just above the horizon.

‘I want my mamma,’ said Montague, in a louder voice.

‘Poor child ! how my heart clings to him, Moses ; he must be walking in his sleep, or perhaps Florence has driven him from her by coldness or neglect.’

She opened the door ; there stood Montague in his white night-gown, looking like little Samuel listening to the voice of God.

‘Montague !’ My Peace stretched out her hand ; tears were in her eyes.

‘I want my mamma, my real mamma,’ persisted the child. ‘I waked up and put my hand out—but

she's gone. She isn't there, and her bonnet's gone too, and her shawl and bag !'

Terrible forebodings crept over me as I recalled the wild look and excited gestures of my kinswoman. Perhaps the child was dreaming. My brave Peace did not hesitate ; she took Montague's hand, saying : ' Come, we will find mamma,' leaving me in almost intolerable suspense. What a weak woman in her desperation or derangement might have been driven to do was beyond my conception. The moments seemed hours until my pale Peace returned. Trembling, she held out an open letter in her hand. ' Heaven have mercy upon us all, Moses,' said my sorrowful Peace. Mechanically I began to read, when I was interrupted by Cynthia's voice outside the door :

' My friends, a carriage drove up to your house early this morning. I peeped through the blinds and I am quite sure I know all that has happened. I am very willing to befriend the child if necessary.'

‘Read the letter, Moses,’ said my pitiful Peace, as Cynthia’s door closed.

I read :

‘DEAR COUSINS, MOSES AND PEACE: Think harshly of me if you will, but love and cherish my child. His heart turns to Peace as a pure flower seeks the light. Make no effort to find me; I have chosen my lot. The future cannot have more hardships in store for me than I have endured in the past. And so farewell, my best and truest friends, and heaven reward you for every kindness bestowed upon my boy.

‘FLORENCE BELLEFAIR.’

Tears fell from the eyes of my tender-hearted Peace.

‘Moses, God speaks to thee, bidding us take the boy as our own, and for his sake and ours let the sad fate of his mother be passed over in silence, for, Moses, she is our kinswoman still. Cynthia already knows all, but those young girls need never hear more than the bare fact that she has gone away and may return, for surely a mother’s heart will some day long to see her child again.’

So decided my pure Peace, and before one whom I deemed might dare to throw the first stone at an

erring sister I was silent. But where was Florence Bellefair? No one could answer. Perhaps she would return.

‘Since Peace believes that the hand of God is in the matter, I have nothing more to say, Moses,’ said Cynthia when we met. ‘But the question is, how far is a person responsible for weakness and frailty? Estimating the effect of direct and indirect influences inherited from a long line of doubtful ancestors, perhaps the individual cannot be found who is really a responsible human creature.’

My Peace shook her head, judging no man or woman harshly. She nevertheless disapproved of Cynthia Stonewall’s Boston theology, although our cousin holds that Boston is the little lump of leaven destined to raise the mass of humanity to a higher level of reasonable religion.

Montague was easily comforted. The first shock of the departure being over, his mamma slipped out of his childish mind. Florence would soon be forgotten; and the heart of his new mother was filled with a strange and wonderful joy. It seemed

as if God had restored to her the great gift of which in years gone by she had been bereft.

‘Moses, don’t let Peace spoil the boy,’ said Cynthia. ‘He has had little training, and requires a firm hand—a very firm hand. She believes in governing by the law of love. She will find other virtues will be needed in his education.’

My loving Peace made no answer—love was her only law. With that she commanded—its dictates she obeyed.

‘I trust, Cynthia, that light and wisdom may be given us to know what is best and right for the boy,’ began my humble Peace.

‘You must cut off these curls; nip in the bud that root of effeminate pride, which his weak and indulgent mother has fostered. Perhaps I should say, his illy balanced parent,’ added Cynthia. ‘For I am convinced that the most strong are weak in their best points of character. And the lace collar and velvet clothes! Oh Peace, as a woman of common sense, as a Quakeress, you believe in the outward adornment of the spirit. Discard them. Let the boy learn

that chivalry is not connected with curls, lace, and velvet, and Moses, my old friend.'—She turned to me—'Eradicate as soon as possible the seeds of false democracy already sown in his young mind. You know "just as the twig is bent the tree's inclined," and if necessary, twig him, Moses, twig him well. Don't spare the rod and spoil the child.'

I listened, her advice was judicious, and I hoped might be beneficial in the education of our adopted son.

* * * * *

'Congratulate me! Friend Moses, you are the best fellow in the world! Look here! I received this telegram just half an hour ago. It is from—from—from—your friend, Mr. Heartie: "You may come with the girls to-night. —THOMAS HEARTIE."

Such was the answer received by the suitors. John Brisk shook everybody's hand vigorously, reserving Roxana's for the last; and Frederic Milder did, as Cynthia would have said, 'ditto,' only seating himself beside Isabel instead of her sister.

The two girls were unusually shy; but John was

very hilarious, and his friend tried hard to be something like him ; and judging from what I had seen, I was certain Frederic would not have been in his present position had not John led the example. In the general bustle of preparing for departure, poor Florence's absence was scarcely noted.

'You see, Friend Moses,' said John, as the girls left the room to get their hats for a last look at the Centennial, 'you see, old boy, what first was accident at last is fate. You didn't mean it ; I didn't ; Roxana didn't ; and it's all come round as naturally as you please. I'll run home with the girls, see the governor, make the family's acquaintance, and perhaps be married in the fall. Isabel is younger, so Fred can wait a year or so ; the governor must be consulted about that.'

'John Brisk,' I interrupted, 'this is a private matter. The governor has nothing to do with it.'

He clapped me on the shoulder. 'Ha ! ha ! You are disposed to be facetious this morning. But joke away, old boy.'

'Ha, ha !' echoed Frederic. 'Don't you see ?

The father is the governor. Very good joke, 'pon my word. Yaas, yaas, an excellent joke, 'pon my word.'

Soon after the four, ready for their final visit to the Exhibition, left us ; when they returned their trunks were packed, the parting words exchanged, my Peace and I accompanying them to the depot.

'Dear, sweet, darling Mrs. Pittman !' exclaimed Isabel, throwing her arms around the neck of my sad Peace. 'I shall never, never forget the Centennial if I live to be a thousand years old, nor your dear, charming home. And remember, when pa and ma send for you to visit them, we will not take no for an answer.'

'Thanks ! thanks, Friend Moses, for everything !' called John, as the whistle sounded.

The train started ; we gazed after it, while the young people waved hands, handkerchiefs, canes, and parasols from the window until they were out of sight. The smoke vanished, the noise of the receding locomotive died away ; our friends, with all their hopes and happiness, were rapidly travel-

ing to their distant home in the West, leaving Moses and Peace Pittman standing on the platform like a man and woman in a dream.

We missed the lively voices and fresh young faces when we went back to the quiet home in Race street. Their visit was already a thing of the past. My gentle Peace, with a sigh, restored things to a state of primitive order in the grey room.

‘We must pray that God will keep them in the hollow of his hand, not forgetting our frail kinswoman, wherever she may be at this moment.’

Montague was clasped in arms of true affection. Concerning his future welfare, his mother need have no doubts or fears. He was in the care of a guardian angel—Peace.

CHAPTER X. .

The grass had not been allowed to grow under Cynthia Stonewall's feet. She continued her pa-

tient, plodding, Centennial investigations until the last moment. But the little hairy trunk was packed ; on the following day Cynthia intended returning to Boston ; and, as we sat in the tea-room engaged for perhaps the last time in familiar conversation, she presented my pleased Peace and myself with two vases of Bohemian glass, as mementoes of her friendship and visit.

‘ They are delicate but exceedingly beautiful, and whenever our eyes rest upon them we will think of thee,’ said my admirable Peace.

‘ The blue is for Peace, the red for you, Moses.’ She placed them on our mantel. ‘ Does the gift recall the giver, or the giver the gift ? that is the question. I should have preferred giving a production of American art, but that may perhaps be possible five hundred years hence. The peasants of Bohemia, hidden away undisturbed in their quiet mountain homes, have been busily at work for centuries. The talent has been bequeathed from father to son for many succeeding generations ;

cultivation, attention, and industry have alone achieved these rare blossoms of art.'

• 'Cynthia,' said my grateful Peace, 'we will part with real regret.'

Here was an opportunity to lay before her the proposal of Friend Hicks. Who could fathom a woman's mind? She might yet be persuaded to doff her ulster and straw hat, unpack her trunk, and cast her lot with the Society of Friends.

'Say but one word, and there need be no separation, Cynthia Stonewall,' I began. 'Consent to become the female head of a comfortable mansion, the step-mother of five healthy children, and the wife of an honorable man.'

My perplexed Peace cast an astonished glance upon me as I pursued. 'Listen, Cynthia. Our kinswoman, Florence, has taken her fate in her own hands. Few words are best; we leave her to that Providence before whom we must all stand or fall. Our young friends have made their choice for weal or woe, as the case may be. And now, Cynthia Stonewall, Friend Hicks, attracted by the charms of your mind, satisfied with your person, proffers thee this offer of marriage! What can I do for thee in this matter?'

‘Moses,’ replied Cynthia, ‘Boston women do for themselves.’

‘He is a man of substance, honest and honorable in all his dealings, kind in his manner. He would maintain thee in every comfort, not to mention luxury,’ I urged, striving to do well by my friend.

‘Give the matter due consideration, Cynthia,’ said my wily Peace, ‘for few women, old or young, would dismiss it without deliberation. It may be the last proposal!’

‘It is the first, Peace, upon my word,’ said Cynthia, with an honest laugh. ‘The woman who deliberates is lost. Cynthia Stonewall, past forty-five, marry a Quaker I have seen but once in my life! Why should I, indeed?’

‘Is this a final answer?’ I tried to put myself in the place of a suitor.

‘Peace, when I am gone, get your husband to bed, blister his temples, soak his feet, and if he be no better, send for a physician, for I am quite sure the events of the past few days have addled his brain. Ah! what is this?’

Sheba entered, bringing in a large parcel, which she placed carefully on the table. Opening it with some curiosity, we found a box within; on its lid these words were inscribed: ‘To Moses and Peace

Pittman, from their mutual friends.'

'A silver elephant with ruby eyes!' exclaimed Cynthia, examining the contents with a critical eye. 'And look, Peace, a name engraved on each foot—Isabel, John, Roxana, Frederic. He has a flag in his trunk—the American flag too, and 1876 branded on his back. From Tiffany's, of course, and do you know that ornament must have cost \$400, if it cost one cent. But Western people never do things on a small scale.'

'Where shall we place this animal?' I asked, as I weighed it in my hands.

'Put it 'tween the wases Cynthia giv you. It's elegant, I think,' said Sheba.

'You will find some elegant work to keep it as spotless and polished as your teaspoons,' cried Cynthia. 'There, Moses, I had almost forgotten to give you my impression of Machinery Hall. In all the other buildings the products and arts of foreign countries bear off the palm. Laces like cobwebs, jewels delicate and beautiful enough to have figured in the "Arabian Nights," marvels of carving, articles useful and beautiful standing unrivalled, and making our efforts seem like mere baby work. I stand still and bow my head in Machinery Hall before American genius. Here is brain, thought, mind! Where the mind has entered the

arena, the American stands with all men of every nation and clime free and equal, if not the peer ! There is the coach, and, Moses, if my eyes do not deceive me, driven by the same rascal who brought me here. Farewell, Peace. Good-bye, Moses. Montague, little fellow, mind that lady, and some day you will grow to be a man. Keep the elephant well polished, Sheba.' .

The little hairy trunk was on the vehicle. I handed to Cynthia her satchel and umbrella, and settled with the driver before he started. Then he carried away our first and last Centennial visitor.

'Is any more comin', Peace Pittman ?' Sheba put her head in the room. I shook mine in answer.

'And no more goin' ?' She looked with suspicion at Montague, who was sitting on my knee.

'No ; the Centennial has brought and left me this gift also, Sheba.' Her mistress touched the boy's head very gently, as she uttered these words.

'A good many folks wouldn't say thankee for him,' muttered Sheba, retreating.

But this gift was more to be desired than gold ; yea, than silver or fine gold—an incomparable treasure to

'My Perfect Peace.'

